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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN PASTORALISTS DISCUSS INTERNAL AND CROSS-  
BORDER CONFLICTS

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: From July 16-18, the UN's Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Activities (UN OCHA) convened approximately 300 pastoralists from about 15 West and East African countries, as part of UN OCHA's DFID-funded Pastoralist Communications Initiative. The meeting provided a platform for significant discussions on the margins between the leadership of the Borena and Gujji Oromos, and resulted in a separate agreement between opposing Nuer communities to continue talks on resolving conflict in Ethiopia's Gambella Region. In addition to conflict mitigation, the pastoralist gathering provided as well opportunities for cross fertilization of ideas on economic development, governance and policy issues, and provision of services such as education. In addition to conflict resolution, livestock marketing and trade also were key topics of discussion. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) This was the second pastoralist gathering organized by UN OCHA's Pastoralist Communications Initiative. The previous Global Pastoralist Gathering in January 2005 drew 200 participants from 23 countries, and met in the Hamar Tribal area of Turmi, in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. The July 16-18 gathering was held at a tented camp near Yabello in the Borena Oromo area, and also included pastoralist experts, NGOs, donors, and observers from Latin America, the Middle East and Iran.

¶3. (U) The timing of the gathering was very relevant, as USAID is embarking on a regional program focusing on pastoralists, with a component on livestock trade. In addition, after the meeting was planned, a major conflict erupted between the Borena people and the neighboring Gujji Oromos, costing an estimated 100 or more lives, which remains unresolved.

¶4. (U) The meeting was fully supported by the Ethiopian government, which facilitated the entry of participants from many countries, and participated with others in the last days of the meeting to hear input from pastoralists. Federal government representatives included officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Federal Affairs, and Agriculture, while regional officials included representatives from the Oromiya, Somali, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNPR) Regions.

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Livestock Marketing and Trade  
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¶15. (U) While plenary discussions addressed livelihoods and livestock in general, at USAID's request a side meeting was held to discuss barriers affecting livestock trade through the northern corridor ports of Bosaso (Puntland, Somalia), Berbera (Somaliland, Somalia) and Djibouti. This was a unique opportunity to speak collectively to representatives of these areas, and to provide input for planning livestock marketing under the Regional Enhanced Livelihoods for Pastoralist Areas (RELPA) project which will be starting soon.

¶16. (U) Approximately 40 representatives of the Somali-speaking areas of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland), and Kenya attended a two-and-half-hour-long campfire meeting, including three Ministers of Livestock and MPs from Ethiopia and Kenya. Participants said this was the first time they had attended a meeting of people from all these Somali-speaking areas since Somalia's dissolution more than 15 years ago.

¶17. (SBU) All agreed that the Rift Valley Fever ban on live animal imports from the Horn of Africa to Saudi Arabia had the biggest impact on reducing prices and volume of trade from the ports. While acknowledging the need for better sanitary or phyto-sanitary control and certification, some say the continuation of the ban is political: a Saudi prince reportedly handles the import of live animals from Australia and is preventing the lifting of the Rift Valley Fever ban on the Horn of Africa. They all asked for U.S. help in removing the ban and in building sanitary and phyto-sanitary capacity. Many thought Saudi Arabia wanted to re-establish imports of sheep and goats from the Horn, and that some certification effort would provide the necessary justification for imports to resume.

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¶18. (U) USAID's Regional Livestock Advisor from Nairobi asked the group about what they had been doing to modernize and improve livestock trade, and their commitment to instituting tough veterinary controls to prevent disease transmission. The Somalis were challenged by this and asked for help in convening a planning session among different stakeholders from Djibouti, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) and Ethiopia to address livestock trade issues. Various officials, including Puntland Minister of Livestock Said Jama Ali, strongly advocated USAID supporting such a follow-up meeting.

¶19. (U) At a subsequent meeting with USAID in Addis Ababa, Kenya's Director of Livestock Production Mr. Julius Kiptarus, who attended the Pastoralist gathering, encouraged USAID to assist in removing the barriers to formal cross-border trade and improving the veterinary delivery and certification services in Ethiopia.

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Conflict  
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¶10. (U) The Gujji-Borena Oromo conflict was omnipresent at the pastoralist gathering due to its proximity to the gathering. Prolonged and in-depth discussions between Gujji and Borena leaders on the margins included the traditional heads from both groups, the Abba Gaddas, who discussed the causes of the conflict and committed themselves to stopping the violence. 'Gathering' organizers reported good progress, citing diminishing reports of violent incidents and decreasing estimates of IDPs from the conflict. The hope is that traditional conflict management structures can be used to resolve the conflict and deal with the underlying causes. Both the Gujji and Borena leadership agreed that they felt the "government", even though this was not clearly defined, was the problem, and that they should re-establish their traditional peaceful relations themselves.

¶11. (SBU) While the overall assessment is that violence is decreasing, some expressed concern that both Abba Gaddas were giving lip service to peace while preparing for another round of fighting. The Gujji Abba Gadda, considered to be closer to the government, has extended his leadership from the normal eight years to another two years (some say three), therefore preventing the accession of the leader of the next age group for his traditional eight-year term. The reason given by the Abba Gadda is that he will deliver a new zone to the Gujji: Western Gujji next to the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, to be carved out of the existing Borena Zone. The conflict was sparked when the government awarded Gujji Zone a section of Borena Zone in late May. The Borena Abba Gadda is said to be "angry as a lion" and still out for revenge for the killings which have taken place so far.

¶12. (SBU) One possible indicator of the fear of further conflict is the movement of Borena Oromos and their Gabbara allies further into Kenya, pushed by the conflict and by fears of further attacks. Ethiopian Gabbara were reportedly making arrangements at the Pastoralist gathering with their fellow Gabbara from Kenya to move into Kenya in large numbers to avoid the conflict. They are said to feel that the Borena will lose the upcoming round of conflict with the Gujji, because the Gujji have government support. Movement of the Borena and Gabbara into Kenya over the past few weeks has caused increased conflict in Kenya: at USAID, Kenya's Director of Livestock reported increased fighting between Borena and neighboring people to the south, which would worsen as the Borena are pushed down from the north for "political" reasons.

¶13. (U) A great success was bringing together opposing sides to discuss conflict in the eastern Gambella Region, between the Nuer community living in Gambella and the Nuer community in Sudan (whose traditional chief attended). Positive discussions concluded with agreement to continue discussions once the groups had returned home. This is a major factor in determining whether the Nuer refugees in Gambella can return to Sudan.

¶14. (U) There was also a great deal of undirected talk about the situation in Somalia, including fear that a serious civil war may erupt. There was considerable debate about how "fundamentalist" the Islamic Courts are, how much they reflect clan structures, and how much support they or the

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Transitional Federal Government enjoyed.

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